

Imprints in the chalk

A self guided walk around White Horse Hill in Uffington



The White Horse, Uffington © Webb Aviation www.webbaviation.co.uk

Explore one of Britain's most atmospheric ancient sites
Visit a chalk horse, an Ice Age valley and England's oldest road
Discover how geology and weather shaped myths and legends
Find out how the landscape has influenced centuries of human activity

www.discoveringbritain.org

*the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks*







This booklet is to be used alongside the audio commentary for this walk

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Imprints in the chalk

Discover how geology has shaped society and culture in Oxfordshire

Introduction

Kings, saints, goddesses, fire-breathing dragons and a giant horse. Welcome to one of the most intriguing and atmospheric sites in Britain.

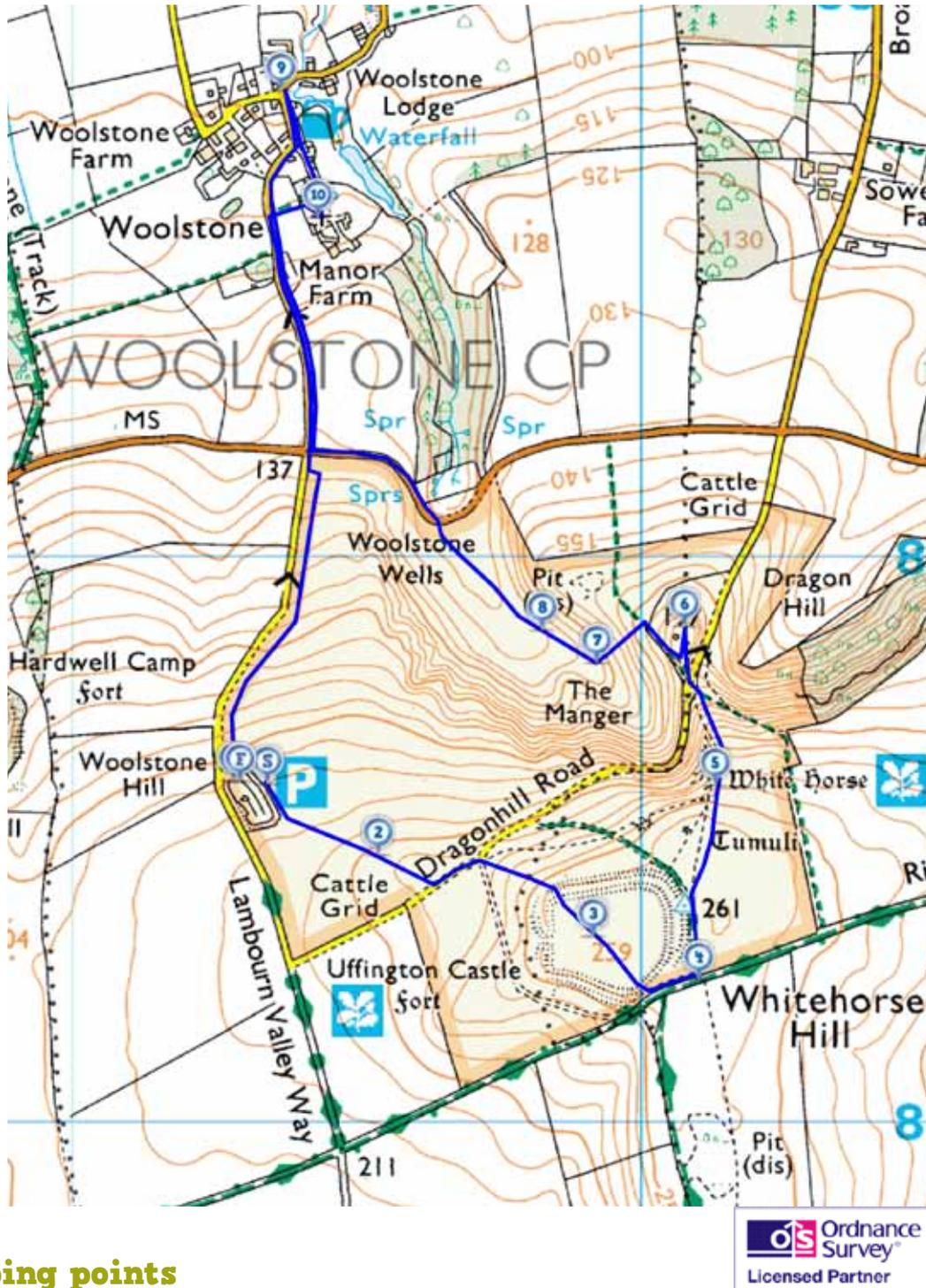
At Uffington in South Oxfordshire, you can enjoy spectacular panoramic views, discover a unique collection of ancient landmarks and explore a picturesque village. This walk uncovers some of the stories behind and beneath this popular place.



Giant's Stair, The Manger
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

You will discover how the underlying rock of a place – in this case chalk – strongly influenced human activity: their fortifications and defences, their religion and culture, their travel and trade, their settlements and buildings. It is a fascinating story of how the physical landscape has shaped human activities and behaviour.

Route overview



Stopping points

1. White Horse Hill car park
2. Path between car park and Dragonhill Road
3. Uffington Castle
4. The Ridgeway
5. The White Horse
6. Dragon Hill
7. The Manger
8. The Manger
9. White Horse Inn, Woolstone
10. All Saints Church, Woolstone
11. White Horse Hill car park
12. White Horse Hill car park

Practical information

Location

Uffington, South Oxfordshire, Southeast England

Getting there

Car - Uffington is south of the B4507 between Ashbury and Wantage. Access via Junctions 14 and 15 of the M4. Look for signposts off A420 Swindon to Oxford road.

A National Trust pay and display car park is at White Horse Hill. Free for National Trust members.

Bus - Weekday bus services by Heyfordian Travel link Uffington with Wantage, Faringdon, and Stanford-in-the-Vale. The nearest stop is 200 metres downhill from the Horse.

On Saturdays only, Thamesdown Transport runs buses to Uffington from Swindon. No bus services on Sundays.

Train - the nearest railway station is Swindon (12 miles away). Also accessible from Didcot (15 miles) and Oxford (21 miles). Regular services run from Bristol Temple Meads, Reading and London Paddington.

Bicycle - access via the Ridgeway, ideal for mountain bikes. Cycle rack at the White Horse Hill car park.

Start point & Finish point

National Trust car park, White Horse Hill, SN6 7PT

Distance

3 miles

Level

Challenging – some very steep ascents and descents across rural land. Unsuitable for wheelchairs, pushchairs or prams.

Conditions

The grassy slopes can get very slippery after wet weather and the route is often blustery. Wear strong walking shoes / boots. Weatherproof clothing is recommended and you may also want to consider taking a walking stick.

Though Woolstone village is quiet the roads are narrow with no pavements. Look out for traffic, especially when walking with children.

Suitable for

Families – an exciting location for children of all ages though bear in mind the notes on Level and Conditions

Dogs – should be kept on a lead in grazing areas

Refreshments

The only refreshments available on the route are at the White Horse Inn in Woolstone village (Stop 10)

You may want to consider preparing / buying provisions before going on the walk. There are plenty of places on the route to enjoy a picnic.

Facilities

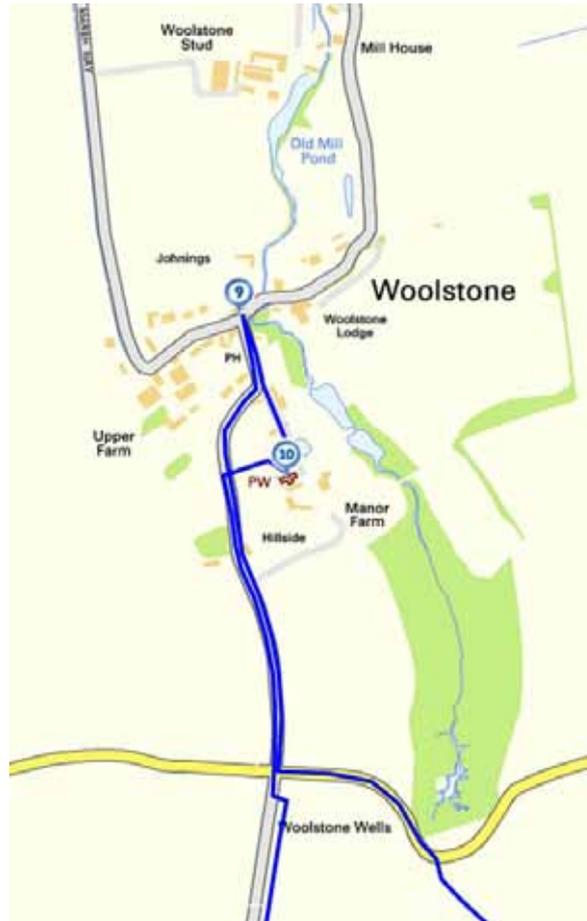
There are no public toilets on the walk route except at the White Horse Inn (Stop 10)

Other info

Wayland's Smithy Neolithic burial site is just 1 mile from the Uffington White Horse. The site is maintained by English Heritage, access via the Ridgeway (Tel: 0870 333 1181)

Ashdown House is a nearby 17th century chalk house in Lambourne, RG17 8RE. Owned by the National Trust. Access by guided tour only (Tel: 01793 762209)

Detail of the route in Woolstone village



Detail of the start and finish of the route



Directions

These directions are for use with the Uffington walk audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. A walk in the chalk

White Horse Hill car park

Directions 1

Leave the car park through one of the three gates onto White Horse Hill. Walk diagonally uphill. Stop partway up the hill, look back down the valley and listen to Track 2.

2. Underneath your feet

Path between car park and Dragonhill Road

Directions 2

Continue uphill across the field. Cross the road and continue diagonally upwards to the summit of the hill, which is Uffington Castle. Stop on the earthen ramparts of the castle and listen to Track 3.

3. Hill top defence

Uffington Castle

Directions 3

Cross the centre of the castle or go round the embankment to the south east corner, which is on the opposite side to the view over the Vale of the White Horse. Find the gate which leads out of the perimeter fence. Go through the gate, stop on the pathway and listen to Track 4.

4. The oldest road in the country

The Ridgeway

Directions 4

Return through the gate and follow the grassy path straight ahead, keeping the Castle embankment on your left. Shortly after the trig point, the path bears right. Follow this grassy path through the dip. This should bring you to the edge of a steep slope near the top of the White Horse. Stop beside the White Horse and listen to Track 5.

5. The horse goddess

The White Horse

Directions 5

You now need to make your way down the hill keeping the White Horse on your left. It is very steep in places so take your time. Cross the road and follow the path on the other side up onto Dragon Hill. Stop on the plateau of Dragon Hill and listen to Track 6.

6. Slaying the dragon

Dragon Hill

Directions 6

Retrace your steps back down from Dragon Hill. Turn right at the bottom of the steps and follow the footpath. Cross the stile ahead and then cross a second stile on the left. This takes you onto the rim of The Manger. Stop here and listen to Track 7.

7. A valley with no stream

The Manger

Directions 7

Follow the footpath down into The Manger. Take care as again the ground is rough and steep. When you reach the bottom turn right. Stop at the wooden gate and listen to Track 8.

8. Avalanche!

The Manger

Directions 8

Continue along the flattest ground at the bottom of this dry valley. Do take a moment to look back up at the view of the White Horse. Go through the gate onto the road. Unfortunately there is no footpath here and you will need to walk on the road for a short distance. This is a minor road but it can be busy with visitors to White Horse Hill and there are several blind bends. Make sure you walk against the traffic and keep a constant lookout for vehicles. At the crossroads, turn right towards Woolstone village. Follow the road down into the village for about 600 metres. When you reach the T-junction beside the White Horse Inn, stop and listen to Track 9.

9. A long and thin village

White Horse Inn, Woolstone

Directions 9

Do take time to explore the village. You can follow either road from the T-junction for a short distance. In particular look out for different building materials, which you will hear about at the next stop. When you are ready, retrace your steps back the way you came. About 100 metres from the Inn, the road bends to the right but there is also a road straight ahead. Follow this road, which is signposted to All Saints Church. Enter the churchyard and listen to Track 10.

10. A hotchpotch of building materials

All Saints Church, Woolstone

Directions 11

Do take time to look in the church. When you are ready, find the gate in the bottom corner of the churchyard opposite to where you came in. Go through the gate and cross the field. Turn left onto the road and retrace your steps back up to the crossroads. Go straight across, which is signposted Uffington White Horse and Waylands Smithy. After a few metres, enter the gateway on the left hand side. Here there is access to a field path up the hill which avoids walking on the road. Follow the path all the way up the hill parallel to the road. Take care as the hill is fairly steep and can be slippery. Stop in the car park and listen to Track 11.

11. Stones like sheep

White Horse Hill car park

Directions 12

Remain in the car park and listen to Track 12.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

- **Professor Andrew Goudie** for creating the walk
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